

“A Sort of Roadmap to Success...”: A Model for Piloting ePortfolios and Lessons Learned From a Rehabilitation Sciences Curriculum

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In this paper, we present the development, implementation, and lessons learned during the 2-year pilot integration of an ePortfolio across a rehabilitation sciences (RS) curriculum within a publicly funded state university. We consider the educational environment and discuss decision points during various stages of the project. Four key aspects of project development and implementation are highlighted, including a contextual analysis of goals, partnerships, curricular positioning, and foundational tools. Contextual analysis of goals includes the process of creating a project vision that aligns with the student population served, programmatic goals, and the guiding frameworks inherent to ePortfolios as a high impact practice. An exploration of partnerships describes the role of diverse stakeholders, within and outside the program, and their contribution to ongoing project development and success. Curricular positioning considers which courses are utilized for the introduction, conclusion, and touch points of the project, and how success is measured in each. A discussion of foundational tools identifies the student-facing resources required to facilitate a clear, relevant, and sustainable ePortfolio across the curriculum. When possible, we highlight student voices, including reflections on motivation, adaptive skill building, and engagement with the ePortfolio process. Ongoing challenges, preliminary outcomes, and next steps are also outlined.

In this paper, we detail the development, implementation, and lessons learned throughout the integration of an ePortfolio across a rehabilitation sciences (RS) curriculum within a publicly funded state university. Decision points and rationale based on evaluation of the educational environment are presented during various stages of the project’s growth regarding (1) contextual analysis of goals, (2) partnerships, (3) curricular positioning, and (4) foundational tools. Plans for ongoing development based on pilot outcomes are discussed.

Background and Context

Students

The majority of students in the RS program indicate that they are interested in pursuing a career in the allied health professions. Upon entering the program, students most frequently name physical therapy (PT) and occupational therapy (OT) as their desired career path, often having heard about these professions from friends and relatives or through experiences of caring for family members with disabilities. While some graduates from the RS program indeed apply to graduate OT and PT programs, many do not. According to alumni surveys, RS graduates have pursued professional paths in a variety of health and human services related areas, such as nursing, case management, and community health—professional areas they often first encountered as part of their undergraduate studies. While this outcome may appear to be common sense and expected, it suggests a need and an opportunity that was not fully addressed in the RS program structure and course curricula—namely, how to facilitate effective and meaningful exploration of future goals and options for our students. RS is a preprofessional

program with a large population of first-generation college students (FGCS), who often enter with little knowledge of the “unwritten rules” required to navigate higher education, insufficient skills for professional exploration, and consequently, limited self-efficacy to connect their experiences with future career paths.

Having increased by a factor of 2.5 in the past decade, FGCS comprise 27% of the undergraduate student population at the University of Illinois at Chicago (University of Illinois System, n.d.). As a result, the development and implementation of learning opportunities that embed equitable strategies and prioritize understanding the experiences of FGCS has never been more critical. Research reflects the unique strengths of this group of students (Demetriou et al., 2017) while also pointing to additional, and often invisible, layers of psychosocial risk which may impact the ability of FGCS successfully transition to college (Jenkins et al., 2013). The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified these stressors (Soria et al., 2020), resulting in an even more urgent demand for institutions of higher education to provide enabling and equitable environments that consider the social, emotional, and physical impact of their educational practices on an increasingly diverse student population.

ePortfolio

The use of ePortfolios is a widely accepted high impact practice (HIP), shown to increase both the engagement and success of diverse learners (Kuh, 2017). ePortfolios have been shown to improve the experience of transition to college for FGCS, providing a platform to construct one’s personal narrative, increase self-awareness of skills, and build self-efficacy

while also reflecting on connections among motivation, sense of belonging, and academic life (Conefrey, 2018). The challenge for our program is not only to introduce our students to new areas of professional knowledge and practice but also—and even more importantly—to enable each one of them to identify their interests and options from a perspective of confidence and a sense of opportunity. Incorporating the ePortfolio across the curriculum emerged as a promising, even if challenging, approach we decided to pursue.

RS program goals position it well to respond to this challenge. From its origins, the RS major was envisioned as offering more than a set of prerequisite courses required for admissions to specific professional rehabilitation programs such as OT or PT. The program's core requirements are interdisciplinary and reflect a holistic approach to health, positing well-being as encompassing physical, social, economic, cultural, and spiritual dimensions. Across the core RS curriculum and beyond, students are required to engage in critical analysis and reflective thinking about key issues encountered in health and human services today. Critical examination of the assumptions and knowledge underlying professional practice goes hand in hand with reflective interpretation and re-interpretation of personal experiences and interactions. It is fair to say that reflection, individual growth, and re-envisioning of one's personal and professional future are embedded in RS courses.

Framework

As ePortfolios are becoming increasingly common in undergraduate programs, so does the understanding that the benefits of the ePortfolio extend beyond simply serving as a reservoir to collect students' best academic work, or an effective assessment strategy (Nguyen, 2013; Woodward, 2000; Yancey, 2019). Currently, the ePortfolio is seen as a vehicle for students to develop their identities as learners, create meaningful connections to future professional plans, and ultimately showcase "who they are" to the professional world (Cordie et al., 2019, p. 17). Within this framework, the ePortfolio is not a set of completed products, but a dynamic and transformative process, at the center of which stands the student's individual story. Through the ePortfolio, students can attain a deeper understanding of their capacities as they integrate their academic work with their personal background and history, as well as their current aspirations and ideas about the future. The ePortfolio, therefore, is a natural site for the student to construct an individualized narrative that tells their unique story (Graves & Epstein, 2011; Mueller & Bair, 2018).

To conceptualize the ePortfolio as storytelling, authors have drawn on theories of narrative construction and meaning making (Graves & Epstein, 2011; Lindsay & Schwind, 2016). Examples of this

approach exist even before the onset of the electronic version of the portfolio. Woodward (2000) suggested that key elements of the narrative genre—temporality, collaboration, voice, performance, and reflection—underlie the student portfolio as it leads to "organizing experience, interpreting events and creating meaning while maintaining a sense of continuity" (p. 340). This view underscores that the ePortfolio can be more than the sum of its parts. Through the intersection of these narrative elements, the students create an individual story with its own unique chronologies, key influences, formative learning experiences, and pivotal points. More recently, the ePortfolio has come to the fore, and in the post-COVID era, understanding its potential to tell students' unique stories effectively is more relevant than ever before.

Advocates of the ePortfolio have argued that it empowers students to configure a narrative or story that imbues meaning into life events and experiences while also establishing narrative continuity with a desired future (Nguyen, 2013). The issue, however, is not only identifying the potential of ePortfolios, but also understanding the mechanisms, or the programmatic, curricular, and pedagogical frameworks that can facilitate successful enactment of storytelling within students' ePortfolio. Mueller and Bair (2018) underscored this point in their critique of ePortfolio implementation that assumes students can "think metacognitively to self direct" (p. 5). On the contrary, they argued, developing a transformative ePortfolio program is "an arduous process for both instructors and students," and it requires substantial planning and resources—dedication to implement well (p. 6).

Evidence-Based ePortfolio Features

We identified several key features of successful ePortfolio programs and critically considered how to adapt and apply these evidence-based strategies as we implement the ePortfolio in the RS program. These features include:

- Direct instruction in reflective practices
- Key curricular touchpoints for ongoing ePortfolio development over time
- Embedded collaborative processes for student sharing and feedback

A shortcoming characteristic of some ePortfolio projects is insufficient attention to direct instruction in reflective practices (Mueller & Bair, 2018). Thinking about one's learning process and outcomes should not be taken for granted but rather incorporated into the curriculum as a skill to learn and practice. Furthermore, reflection is the process by which the various artifacts a

student includes in an ePortfolio become part of a unified and personalized storyline that connects discrete experiences to create a personal sense of direction and future aspirations (Cordie et al., 2019).

In our program, faculty have recognized the need to teach and scaffold students' ability to reflectively synthesize learning and experiences; in fact, the ePortfolio project was conceived as a potential response to this need. Thus far, the emphasis has been on developing content-neutral guidelines and tools that can facilitate reflective thinking and evaluation of relevance and significance with regards to diverse experiences in college and beyond. Students are required to use a structured reflection guide as part of assignments in all the key ePortfolio courses. Furthermore, the ePortfolio process can be enhanced by integrating complementary HIPs (Conefrey, 2017) such as the first-year seminar we use as the starting point for ePortfolio development. In this course, time is taken to explain and illustrate the guided reflection process. However, based on our aggregated experience and student feedback (reviewed later), we recognize, as have other programs (e.g., Wenk, 2019), the need to expand and augment direct instruction and practice opportunities both in content-neutral context and in relation to the specific contents of various key courses.

Another programmatic feature associated with successful integration of ePortfolio practice is the institution of key points in the curriculum when students are required to work on the construction of their ePortfolios. At these key points, students should focus on creating new artifacts for the ePortfolio and on receiving feedback for and editing what is already there (Cordie et al., 2019). After establishing the ePortfolio beginning and end points, the first-year seminar and a senior synthesis seminar, two more core courses in the RS program were identified as touchpoints for the ePortfolio. It was important not to require course instructors to alter their course plans significantly, especially since they were already working under strenuous and stressful demands to adjust their courses during the pandemic. Rather, the faculty collaboratively decided to designate an existing assignment in each key course to be a *signature assignment*, which would be incorporated as an ePortfolio artifact. Instructors were requested to make the ePortfolio tools and resources available to students in the course and to include a reflection component in the signature assignment rubric.

Another reason for this incremental approach is that during the pilot implementation, students are at various stages along the ePortfolio development path. At this time, key ePortfolio courses may have some students who have already started their ePortfolio and others who have not. While all students complete

signature assignments in these key courses, for now, the requirement to integrate these as artifacts into the ePortfolio occurs only in the senior synthesis seminar, where the completed ePortfolio is the final product of the course. Introducing ePortfolio components into existing core classes gradually also allows the various stakeholders to reflect and receive feedback before instituting major changes in the program's core courses. Ultimately, however, all students in the program will begin constructing their ePortfolios in their first year of the program and will have structured opportunities to work on it (adding, editing, designing) as part of touchpoint courses and senior synthesis.

ePortfolio research suggests that the ePortfolio narrative emerges through ongoing selection, reflection, and interaction. Students construct and tell their stories not only by gathering and arranging written work, multimedia samples, images, and other artifacts but also—and just as crucially—through sharing and discussing their ePortfolio while working on it (Cordie et al., 2019; James et al., 2019). As a shared platform, the ePortfolio provides a unique opportunity for reflective iteration through interaction with other students' stories and responses. Maybe the most telling example for how reflection and interaction work in ePortfolios is that students include not only successes but also barriers they faced and even failures they experienced, since these become powerful narrative points in the story they create for their audience (Nguyen, 2013). Furthermore, if students only receive feedback in response to private viewing by instructors, they miss out on real opportunities to practice presenting the story they construct, listening and responding to feedback, and adapting their delivery to various audiences.

Presently, the RS ePortfolio program provides limited opportunities for interaction and structured peer feedback. Students with completed ePortfolios have begun mentoring other students either in their capacity as undergraduate course assistants or as tutors in an academic resources center outside the department. However, we realize that more peer discussion, sharing, and mutual feedback are needed to implement the ePortfolio successfully as an enabling practice of personal and professional growth. We also understand that to accomplish this goal there needs to be a "substantive shift" (Mueller & Bair, 2018, p. 9) in how we think about courses and assignments. For the ePortfolio to be a tool for curricular integration and personal growth, students need opportunities to focus on what they learn across courses and in the context of their life experiences and aspirations. The ePortfolio is a framework for learning as interpretation, where students not only receive but also actively create and assess their education (Nguyen, 2013). Our next steps will aim at realizing this potential.

Figure 1
 Timeline and Steps for ePortfolio Pilot

Term	Fall 2020	Spring 2021	Fall 2021			
Course	AHS 101 Rehabilitation Sciences Student Success Seminar	AHS 393 Synthesis in Health/ Rehabilitation Sciences	AHS 101 Rehabilitation Sciences Student Success Seminar	AHS 325 Approaches to Rehabilitation Case Management	AHS 365 Measurement & Assessment in Rehabilitation	AHS 393 Synthesis in Health/Rehabilitation Sciences
ePortfolio Growth						
Features	Introduce ePortfolio with 2 assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning of semester: Create a student bio End of semester - Complete 1 reflection assignment related to one learning experience using structured reflection guide Piloting of structured reflection guide 	Pilot of full ePortfolio version: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 students completed over one semester as a synthesis of their experiences The ePortfolio includes at least: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homepage 3 academic assignments Reflection on creating the project 	New format for course with expanded focus on student success and skill building: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporated goal setting, interest and strength exploration, career development, applied on-campus engagement opportunities, and practice of reflection skills 3 in-class ePortfolio workshops: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> roll out of new resources: reflection guidelines, video tutorials, student examples, and in-class time devoted to beginning each section 	Integrated signature assignments into core courses in Rehabilitation Sciences major: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of the courses included Discussion Board assignment to share and discuss individual topic selections for projects Incorporated resources into Blackboard for each course: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Step by step instructions and demos for website creation Guide with vocabulary prompts for structured reflection 	ePortfolio becomes one of 3 project options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional resources available -- recorded demos and student mentors 	
ePortfolio Development & Lessons Learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified need for more formalized, in-depth direct instruction and follow up on reflective thinking To ensure continuity of project, ePortfolio must to be built into the structure of other courses for credit Resources should be responsive to specific challenges experiences in various stages of the development of the ePortfolio 	Students found it difficult to recall meaningful learning experiences in detail from semesters ago <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need for in the moment opportunity to capture these experiences; Students requested additional resources to assist with navigating technology & use of web builder <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experienced students/student mentors developed course-specific resources 	Need for expanded opportunities for students to interact and share their work with peers	Need more structured opportunities for students to share work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand discussion board sharing from single event to ongoing practice Implement structured opportunities for oral sharing and feedback; possible in small groups. Students may need help with technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider ePortfolio webinar available to all students and live 1x semester 	Future plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update resources for website and reflection based on feedback in student surveys Integrate structured opportunities to share ePortfolio process alongside signature assignments Develop guidelines for including experiences outside of major and/or university Consider avenues for students to share their final products 	

RS ePortfolio Project Vision

To develop an ePortfolio practice, we sought to deeply understand the students we serve and the core goals of the RS program. Our purpose was to identify the characteristics and synergistic frameworks of ePortfolio practice that align with the needs and opportunities we saw in our program and create an overarching vision for the project. Key to this overarching vision are the specific needs of our student body, our programmatic goals and equity focus, what we learned about the ePortfolio as a storytelling framework, and the need to adapt features of ePortfolio implementation that have been proven effective into the context of our program. The resulting vision for the RS ePortfolio Project is to provide an evidence-based platform for diverse learners to create, revise, and construct effective personal narratives, and foster self-efficacy in sharing their stories around key themes, including: (a) their path and development toward academic and professional goals; (b) the outcomes of structured reflection on impactful assignments, critical life events, and skills gained during their time in the RS program; and (c) integration of learning across academic and practice-based experiences.

Creating a vision that is grounded in an analysis of how this project would contribute to our students' academic, personal, and professional success in the RS program and beyond has been an essential first step. As project development continues, we will revisit this vision of the ePortfolio to ask whether it aligns with our student population, program requirements, and curricular goals.

Development and Implementation

Timeline: Incorporation of the ePortfolio From 2020-2021—Characteristics

The process of incorporating an ePortfolio practice into the RS curriculum developed over the course of two academic years and is outlined in Figure 1. The project began in Fall 2020 with the integration of an introductory module at the beginning and end of a single course in which students completed a simple profile page and a reflection on one learning experience from their semester. Since then, the ePortfolio project has grown to include touchpoints in four courses, two signature assignments, and a final ePortfolio product containing five pages. This final ePortfolio includes a structured reflection on learning experiences both inside and outside the classroom, as well as student insights on how the process of ePortfolio development impacted them. Important support for the growth of the project came through partnership with students, who helped develop tailored resources such as step-by-step video tutorials to demystify web builder skills and provided

mentorship through sharing their own work samples and experiences during in-class workshops. This collaboration with students not only eased the ePortfolio-related workload for instructors but also reduced students' hesitations and anxiety about the new requirement. Students felt less intimidated by the process because of working with each other and being mentored by other students. Throughout the development process, feedback received from students informed ongoing problem-solving, and was instrumental in maintaining the relevance, relatability, and overall improvement of the ePortfolio process.

Partnerships

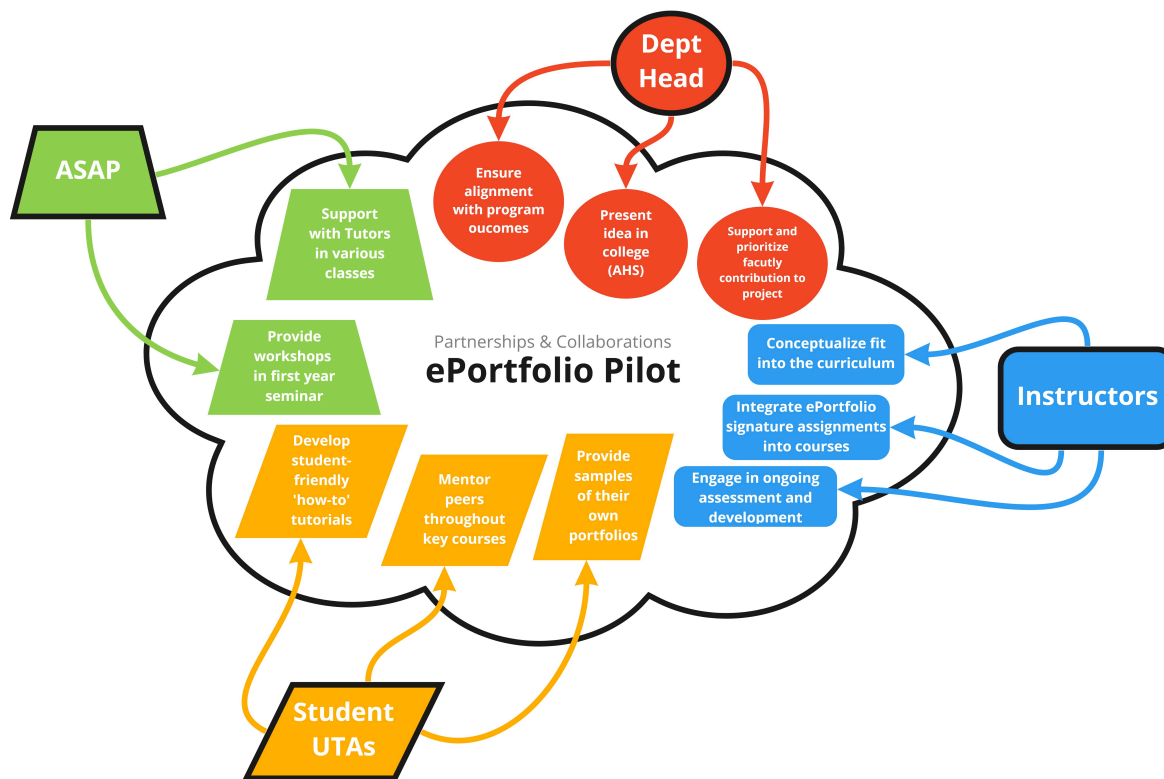
To be successful, this project required (and will continue to require) the support of a broad group of stakeholders (Figure 2). The program director and core faculty endorsed the ePortfolio idea early on, but the degree and nature of necessary faculty commitment became clear over time. As suggested by Mueller and Bair (2018), implementation of ePortfolio throughout the curriculum is not an add-on but rather a shift in how teaching and learning are conceptualized and implemented. The faculty teaching the courses with signature ePortfolio assignments used regular weekly program meetings to plan, problem solve, and define ways forward through the different phases of implementation. These ongoing collaboration opportunities were key as faculty began to embed ePortfolio into their course plans, identified needed resources, and could openly discuss any hesitations they had about needed computer skills.

Student engagement at every stage has been integral to the development of targeted resources, establishment of student-facing samples, and access to peer mentors to discuss the process. Multiple undergraduate teaching assistants (UTAs) have supported resource creation and acted as peer models throughout. At the same time as the collaborative structure to support implementation of the ePortfolio has taken shape within the program, we reached out to stakeholders outside the department. The Academic Support and Achievement Program, a tutoring and student resource center on campus, has partnered with our project to offer one-on-one tutoring to those who would like additional support during the development of their ePortfolio. Tutors who have experience with creating their own ePortfolio and knowledge of the project will be provided by this campus center.

Curricular Positioning

Four courses have been strategically chosen as touchpoints for ongoing student development of ePortfolios. Combining complementary HIPS, such as

Figure 2
Partnerships and Collaborations for ePortfolio Pilot



ePortfolio practice and first-year seminars, has been shown to enhance their effectiveness (Conefrey, 2017). Accordingly, the first-year seminar course was selected to introduce the ePortfolio project in our program, as its content is complementary, including opportunities for students to practice skills such as goal setting, exploration of strengths and interests, career discovery, and critical reflection. In this course, ePortfolio assessment and feedback combine points earned for steps in the design process (e.g., creating a home page and tabs), grades received for course assignments that are incorporated into the ePortfolio (e.g., goal setting and student elevator pitch assignments), and peer feedback during in-class ePortfolio workshops.

Of the four courses selected, two were chosen to contribute “signature assignments” to students’ ePortfolios. These assignments were already part of the core courses offered by the program, and faculty collaborated to adjust requirements so that the structured reflection components for the ePortfolio were embedded into the assignment requirements and the grade for their course. In these courses, strategies for providing ePortfolio feedback are yet to be fully implemented. Currently, students receive a grade for completing the

signature assignments, which includes feedback on their structured reflection. Faculty also brainstormed ways for students to share their ideas and reflections. One course strategy to implement this evidence-based component and bolster student success was to use a discussion board, where students shared ePortfolio work in-progress and commented on each other’s ideas.

Students formally conclude their ePortfolio project in a synthesis course designed for upperclassmen. With a greater amount of on and off campus academic and professional experiences, students in this course reach a final point to add, edit, and mold their personal and professional identities as presented in the ePortfolio. Most of this course consists of several workshops, during which students share work, complete self-assessment, and provide feedback to each other. During this time, students may take extra care considering who the audience for their work may be as they near graduation—including potential employers, graduate program review committees, or volunteer organizations.

While there are four designated checkpoints and two courses that offer in-class workshop time for students beginning and concluding the development of ePortfolios, it is important to note that the RS curriculum

is not set in a mandated order. This means that ePortfolio contributions during each of these courses are completed in the unique order that each student takes them, including alternative points of entry into the major for transfer and nontraditional students. To address this structural challenge, we provide uniform ePortfolio guidelines in each of the four touchpoint classes. While not a perfect solution, these guidelines build awareness of the project and allow students to comfortably complete expectations regardless of the order in which they take courses in the RS major.

Foundational Tools

As noted previously, best ePortfolio practice dictates that students are most successful with ePortfolios when provided with clear, ongoing instruction related to the “how” and “why” of this process. To this end, a project guidelines document was created which gives an overview of what the ePortfolio is (and is not), a timeline for the courses in which students will work on their ePortfolio, and an introduction to the resources available along the way. The introductory page of the project guidelines document has been included in the Appendix. Embedded in this document is also a structured reflection guide that provides prompts and sample vocabulary to bolster student’s reflective writing process. All the contributions that students add to their ePortfolios, including the signature assignments selected from two key courses, are presented in a consistent format. Students organize their writing into a three-part rubric structure that encompasses the reflective component of the ePortfolio. Particular emphasis was placed on using this guide for reflective writing since the scaffolding of reflection skills has been identified as essential to successful student engagement with ePortfolios (Landis et al., 2015). The guidelines document serves as a stand-alone ePortfolio roadmap; it clearly defines the full expectation and allows students to anticipate the various ePortfolio touchpoints built into the curriculum.

In addition to the uniform guidelines presented across courses, students have access to peer student samples and can use these as models for the selection of assignments or events to include in their ePortfolio, and for completing the three-part reflective writing piece about them. Additionally, students have access to a template website with populated instructions in various sections of the ePortfolio. Student assistants used this mock site to record step-by-step tutorials (approximately two minutes each) on navigating the web builder and various topics related to creating a personal webpage.

Lastly, we initiated in-class workshops, which provide students with dedicated time to begin ePortfolio

assignments and discuss their ideas and process with peers. Because most students are not familiar with ePortfolios, we found that it is important to provide sufficient time to problem-solve, access peer UTAs who have already completed an ePortfolio, and be available for any questions that arose.

Preliminary Assessment and Ongoing Feedback From Students

Throughout the pilot stages of development and implementation, it has been critical to continually request feedback related to student-facing processes and the experiences of creating the ePortfolio as it is currently structured. To this end, 40 out of 54 enrolled students (74% response rate) from two courses (first-year seminar and senior synthesis seminar) completed a survey to assess the level of use and perceived helpfulness of foundational tools provided to support the development of student ePortfolios. The most used tools, as reported by students, include peer student ePortfolio samples ($n = 36$), step-by-step video tutorials ($n = 29$), and template ePortfolio site ($n = 28$; see Figure 3). All five tools assessed were rated as either “helpful” or “very helpful” by 80% or greater of total responses (see Figure 4). The tool with the highest use rating, peer student ePortfolio examples, was also rated as “very helpful” by the largest percentage of students (75%). Interestingly, 10% of students rated in-class sessions with peer feedback as “not helpful,” pointing to an opportunity for further investigation and adaptation of this foundational tool in future semesters.

Students were also asked to describe their experience in their own words in response to four questions. We asked how the ePortfolio changed their view of their experiences, how it influenced their thoughts about and plans for the future, and what challenges they encountered as they were working on their ePortfolios (adapted from Nguyen, 2013). Responses indicate strong endorsement of the project by the first group of students to complete it. A significant majority stated that working on their ePortfolio increased their confidence and pride in their accomplishments (e.g., “I realize I have promising skills that can lead me to reaching my goals.”). Many also indicated that the ePortfolio made them feel optimistic about the future, an outcome we especially value in the context of current difficulties experienced by many undergraduate students (e.g., “made me more hopeful about my future and the things I can do”). At the same time, students also commented that the ePortfolio helped them clarify priorities and develop action plans, such as pursuing more campus activities or seeking volunteer and internship opportunities in their fields of interest (e.g., “I planned out my next semester so that I have enough organized space to

Figure 3
Student Report of ePortfolio Tool Use

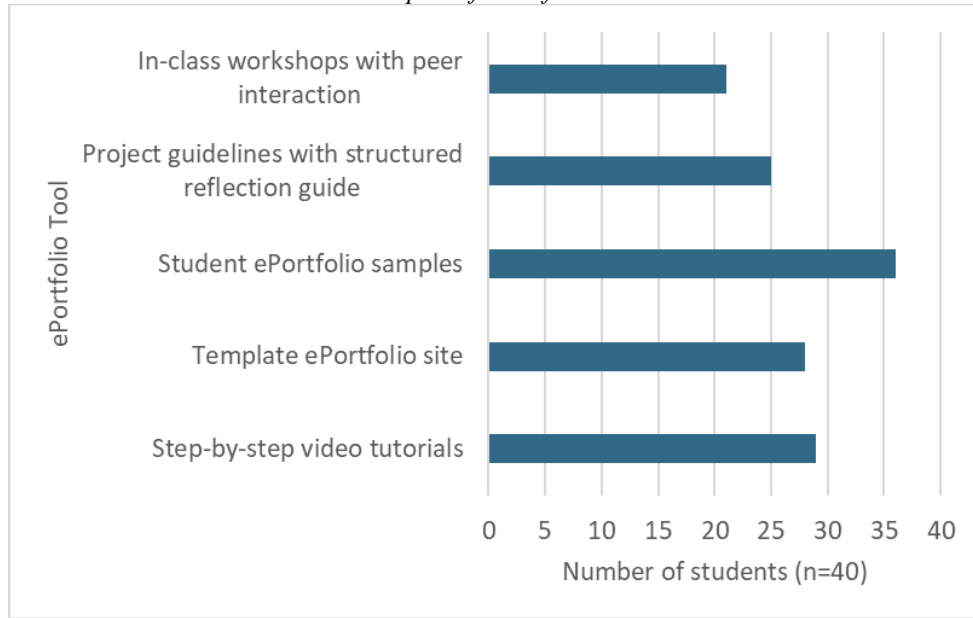
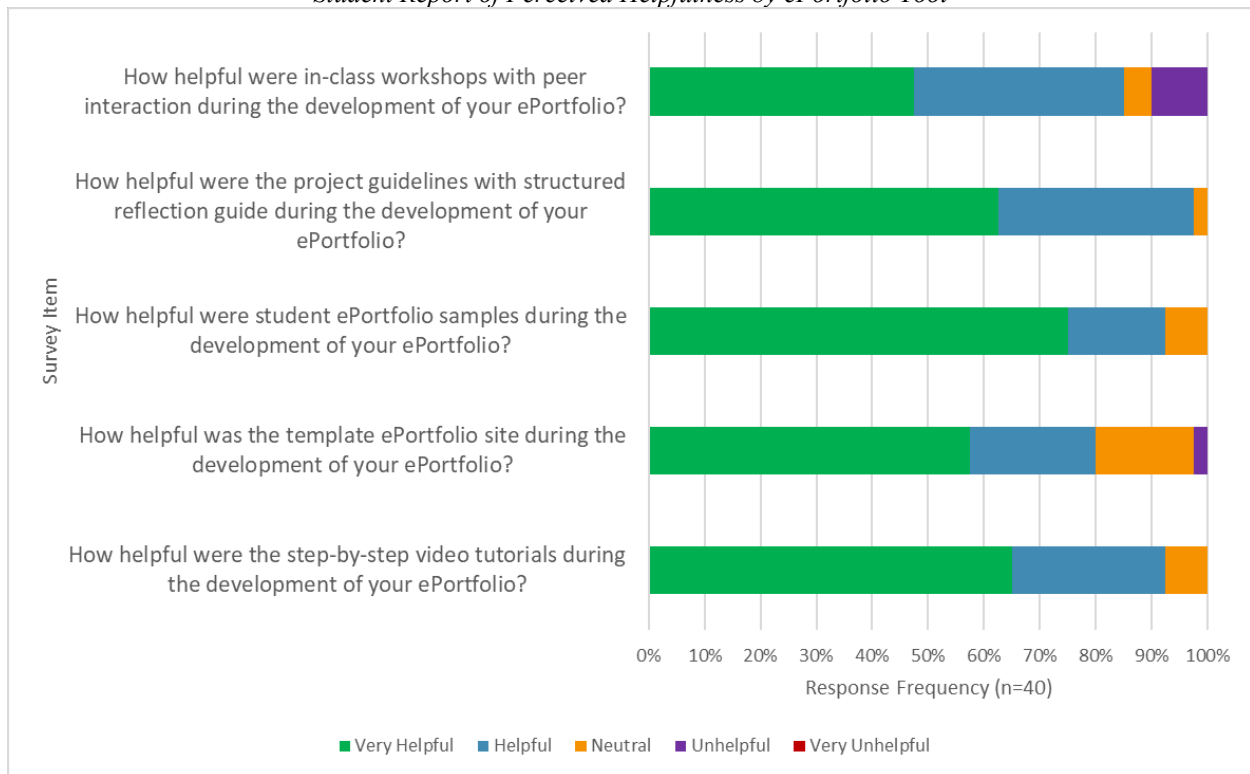


Figure 4
Student Report of Perceived Helpfulness by ePortfolio Tool



create experiences for myself and get volunteer hours and stay involved within the UIC and Rehab Sciences community”). Finally, students commented that working on the ePortfolio was an opportunity to develop and augment skills such as being organized, professional communication, and web design.

Students also reported two types of challenges. Seventeen, or about half of the students responding to the survey, indicated that they were anxious about developing a website. Although most of them acknowledged the usefulness of the resources provided (e.g., instructional videos and demos), it appears that a more structured approach to learning and implementing relevant web builder skills, including how to create visually pleasing pages, needs to be included in the future as an integral part of in-class instruction. Another concern was expressed by 23 students, or slightly more than half of those who responded to the survey. These students indicated that they felt overwhelmed by the content requirements. For some, the issue was how to select among their multiple experiences (e.g., “I have many experiences but some of them just don’t feel right to add on.”), while others felt that they were short on ideas (e.g., “especially if we didn’t have much experience”). The significance of providing guidance for the selection of artifacts to be included in the ePortfolio has been recently underscored by Yancey (2019), who suggested a distinction between curation of ePortfolio artifacts based on neutral organizing principles, such as the order in which courses were taken, and an intentional process where criteria and categories for gathering, organizing, and selecting artifacts are subjectively identified and prioritized. No doubt, more thought should be given to how we can offer more guidance for students. A promising direction is incorporating structured opportunities for sharing and peer review.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The 2-year path to development and implementation of an ePortfolio project has yielded many insights about the students we serve, the guiding tenets of our RS program, and the role of ePortfolio practice in inspiring integrative and transformative experiences for our students. Moreover, we believe that the lessons we learned, and the next steps we plan to implement, can resonate with faculty interested in developing ePortfolio practices and contribute to the discourse on effective ePortfolio programs.

The first of these insights is the need for continual iteration driven by the voices of our students. In students’ ePortfolio practice there truly is no “finished” product; and so is the case on the programmatic level. Rather than aiming for an ideally structured ePortfolio project within the curriculum, we endorse the demand

for ongoing reflection, inquiry, and amendments implemented by instructors as the context and needs of the program and our students shift over time. Based on our students’ feedback, we plan to expand instructional time and focus in two areas:

- Expand resources, allocate additional time, and provide more structured instructional support for the construction of the ePortfolio. This can include:
 - Instruction in basic web-builder skills to level the tech-expertise field and reduce students’ anxiety about technology use.
 - Resources for all levels of computer skills, including step by step live video tutorials on website constructions based on specific ePortfolio requirements, and access to sample site created by students.
 - Dedicated in-class time for reviewing demos and discussing characteristics of website structure and aesthetic features, such as clarity, professionalism, organization, and content.
- Address student-reported difficulties with selecting artifacts to include in the ePortfolio.
 - Development an instructional component that facilitates thoughtful and reasoned selection of which experiences to include and how they would relate to each other in the ePortfolio (e.g., experimenting with different ways to categorize experiences, as suggested by Yancey, 2019).

Secondly, much thought and high priority must be given to the practical pedagogical features and assessment practices that can make the ePortfolio an instrument of transformative learning. Instructors are used to assessing student work on their own, and indeed the traditional way may be more expedient. However, the ePortfolio process challenges students to gain skills in assessing their own learning through making meaningful connections among their coursework, broader learning experiences, and personal and professional goals. Transferring agency to students over their own learning requires planning and coordination among faculty and across courses over an extended timeline. Currently this is a work in progress for our program, but based on our experience and students’ feedback, we believe the following to be useful:

- Increase structured opportunities for students to share, edit, and collaboratively discuss their ongoing work with expanded in-class time throughout the curricular integration of the ePortfolio, and especially during development touchpoints.

- Provide process-oriented instruction and scaffold critical reflection in the context of specific key ePortfolio assignments.
- Implement a semester long (or more) workshop series that is dedicated entirely to collaborative review by students. (In our program, this occurs in the synthesis course, the final step in ePortfolio development for RS students.)
- Incorporate a culminating event for students to share their ePortfolio with peers before they graduate from the program.

We believe that providing students with an opportunity to formally share their final product ePortfolio adds two critical facets to the ePortfolio project: graduating students are given a platform to display their integrative work and share pivotal reflections about their time as RS majors, while students newer to the program are able to observe models for meaningful construction of personal stories and identities, and deepen their understanding of and motivation for participating in the project.

In conclusion, it is important to note that even amid ongoing iteration of ePortfolio structure and conceptualization of how we measure transformative learning, students have found participating in the ePortfolio process motivating and even inspiring. They reported a desire to increase their engagement, excitement about building a roadmap for their future and saw in the ePortfolio a means of better recognizing and communicating their accomplishments. As one student reflected, “one day someone is going to read this”—ours is an ongoing commitment to provide a space for students to confidently build and tell their stories.

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Appendix

ePortfolio Project Guidelines Introductory Page

RS Student ePortfolio Project (RS-SteP)**What is an ePortfolio?**

It's an individually curated website that collects students' work paired with reflections. It includes evidence of your learning, achievements, and progression toward goals. This includes BOTH academic experiences within the classroom (presentations, papers, assignments) as well as learning opportunities outside the classroom (volunteer work, events, clubs, organizations, research, internships).

Why create an ePortfolio?

Build personal, academic, and professional identity while reflecting on your capabilities and growth.

Connect and make sense of learning experiences across courses and over time.

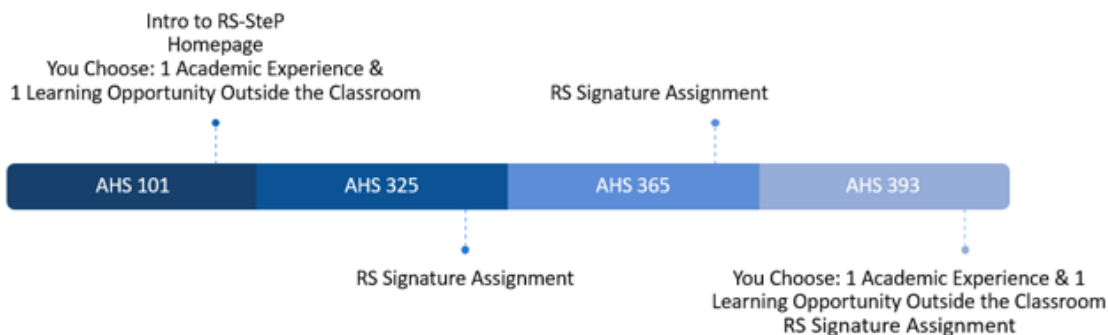
Increase self-awareness of what is already known and what still needs to be learned.

Engage in proactive planning for academic and career paths.

Communicate skills to graduate programs, employers, and volunteer opportunities.

What will the process of ePortfolio development be across my courses in RS?

There are 4 touchpoints throughout the RS curriculum where you'll earn points for developing and updating your ePortfolio (AHS 101, AHS 325, AHS 365, AHS 393). In some courses you'll choose the additions to your ePortfolio, and in others, you'll complete Signature Assignments defined within the course. That said, we hope you'll add to your site whenever you complete a particularly thought-provoking assignment or attend an event on campus that inspires you.

**What does a completed ePortfolio look like?**

One of the most exciting parts about ePortfolio development is that it's a living document – you can always add, amend, update, and improve on your site as you continue to grow. That said, we've included a few examples of upperclass students' products in progress within the Resources section of this document.

Are there resources to help along the way? What if I've never created a website before?

You'll have templates, student workshops, structured reflection guides, and how-to videos to make the process clear and feasible. Student leaders and faculty will be available to guide you and provide feedback every step of the way.

What if I've already completed AHS 101 or one of the above courses and did not develop my ePortfolio yet?

This document serves as a roadmap for you to develop your ePortfolio – even if you've already taken one or more of the courses listed above. We hope you'll take the opportunity to utilize this important tool no matter what stage you're at in your RS career. Contact jwesco2@uic.edu if you'd like to be connected to a student mentor, meet with faculty who can support you in getting started, or explore earning credit for developing your ePortfolio.